

undertaken to answer this question as this falls under their jurisdiction.

Boosting of trade with Australia

1287. PROF. (SHRIMATI) BHARATI RAY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether government are aware of the news-item titled "Jaswant discusses steps to boost trade with Australia" appearing in the Hindu dated 21st June, 2001;

(b) whether the possibility of Australia exporting LNG and boosting trade which has come down by 0.7 billion between the two countries in 2000-2001 in comparison to 1997-98 and the position of both the countries with regard to Fiji issue was discussed by him during his recent visit to that country; and

(c) if so, what are the details of the outcome on each issue?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) Yes, Madame.

(b) Yes, Madame.

(c) The question regarding bilateral trade between India and Australia was discussed by EAM both with Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer and with Australian Trade Minister Mark Vaile. It was agreed that bilateral trade was not commensurate with the potential and that efforts should be made both to increase it and to improve the balance which is currently adverse for India. Increasing investor confidence through simplifying rules and encouraging visits of Trade Delegations from India were some of the suggestions made. Opportunities in the field of information technology, roads and ports, mining, housing and infrastructure, and insurance were also highlighted. The possibility of Australia exporting LNG to India was also discussed as India needs energy from sources other than coal to reach its GDP growth targets.

It will be seen, however, that while India's exports to Australia

[2 August, 2001]

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declined in 1998-99 following our nuclear tests, they recovered in 1999-2000 to A\$714.5 million, an increase of 7.3%.

Fiji was discussed with Australian Foreign Minister. Both Foreign Ministers expressed the hope that the elections in Fiji would be fair and free and without violence and looked forward to Fiji returning to democracy. EAM conveyed India's concerns regarding Fiji's chronic problems of racial disharmony and landlessness of Indo-Fijian Sugarcane farmers and sought Australian support and that of the international community to resolve these issues also.

Benefits to deputationists

1288. SHRI RAJ NATH SINGH 'SURYA': Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the deputationists in the borrowing department are being given less benefits than the parent department;

(b) if not, whether the deputationists working as lecturers in SHERUBTSE COLLEGE, KANGLONG, BHUTAN are devoid of certain benefits which they enjoy in the parent organizations, namely earned leaves (ELs) and joining time, etc; and

(c) whether lecturers on deputation are denied ELs in the said college on the pretext of availability of 83 days vacation, whereas in their parent organization they get both as in case of Delhi University, they get more than 12 days ELs in addition to 105 days vacation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) and (b) The allowances and benefits drawn by deputationists from India in Bhutan have generally been higher than the entitlements in their respective parent departments. A Composite Bhutan Compensatory Allowance which is more than the various allowances available in the parent department such as Dearness Allowance/Interim relief, City Compensatory Allowances, etc. is offered to all the deputationists in Bhutan. In addition, there are other entitlements such as free air passage, carriage of excess baggage, Outfit Allowance, etc., which are normally not available in the individual's parent department/